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Tiger pregnant at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium *Future cubs' father diagnosed with cancer*



Bali, a male Sumatran tiger at Point Defiance Zoo, is expecting cubs with his mate Jaya later this May, but he has been diagnosed with cancer.

Tacoma, Wash. – Jaya, an endangered Sumatran tiger at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, is pregnant and is expected to give birth later this month. Zoo staff have seen two cubs during ultrasound procedures and say a third may be present.

Jaya's mate, Bali, who sired the future cubs, has been diagnosed with cancer and started chemotherapy treatment in late April.

"This is truly a bittersweet story of the circle of life," said Zoo general curator Karen Goodrowe Beck. "Animals come and go, but a species as endangered and beloved as this really has an impact on all of us."

The estimated due date for the cubs is May 22, and staff are carefully preparing for their arrival. According to Goodrowe Beck, those preparations include 24-hour watch beginning several days before birth, continuous video monitoring and hand-rearing supplies at the ready.

"Wild animals sometimes don't care for their young, and there is a small chance Jaya, as a first-time mother may not care for her cubs," said Goodrowe Beck. "In case anything does go wrong, our staff are prepared to swiftly step in and manage their care."

In addition to planning for the cubs' birth, zoo veterinary and animal care staff are caring for the father, Bali. They are hoping for the best and preparing for the worst. Zoo veterinarians are consulting with a veterinary oncologist to provide the best treatment possible, and his health is being closely monitored.

"We don't know how long Bali has," said Goodrowe Beck. "We are treating his illness and keeping a close eye on his quality of life."

Both Bali and Jaya can be seen on exhibit in the zoo's Asian Forest Sanctuary. Bali is displaying no outward signs of treatment, but to the keenest of eyes, Jaya's pregnancy is beginning to show.

A typical tiger pregnancy lasts a little more than three months. After they are born, the cubs will remain behind the scenes for several months. If all goes well, the cubs will make their debut on exhibit later this summer.

Six-year-old Jaya, has lived at Point Defiance Zoo since 2004. Bali, 11, came to Tacoma from the San Francisco Zoo in September 2009, and his illness was not apparent at that time.

For more information about Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, visit www.pdza.org or call 253-591-5337.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo & aquarium, is located in Tacoma's beautiful Point Defiance Park, 5400 North Pearl Street. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).